

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-20 NSC-07 SP-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-11 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 DRC-01

/084 W

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R 281730Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7690

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BRIDGETOWN 1494

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV BB

SUBJECT: HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY DEBATES PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL  
AMENDMENTS

1. YESTERDAY (AUGUST 27), IN HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, PRIME MINISTER BARROW PERSONALLY OPENED DEBATE ON BILL TO AMEND CONSTITUTION WHICH INTRODUCED BY GOB ON JULY 9. IN RAMBLING 3 1/2 HOURS SPEECH, FREQUENTLY INTERRUPTED BY OPPOSITION CHALLENGES ON POINTS OF ORDER, HE ATTACKED THOSE WHO HAD EXPRESSED OPPOSITION TO BILL IN PRESS AND ELSEWHERE BUT FAILED TO MAKE CONVINCING CASE FOR AMENDMENTS. INDEED, HE WENT SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT HE DID NOT CARE WHO APPOINTED JUDGES, THOUGH PROPOSED CHANGE IN METHOD OF MAKING JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS IS ONE OF BILL'S MOST CONTROVERSIAL FEATURES. DECLARING THAT PARLIAMENT WAS ONLY APPROPRIATE FORUM FOR DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS, HE SPECIFICALLY RULED OUT POSSIBILITY OF A REFERENDUM ON THE QUESTION.

2. IN HIS EQUALLY LONG BUT MORE TO-THE-POINT REPLY, OPPOSITION LEADER ADAMS WARNED THAT PASSAGE OF GOB BILL WOULD LEAD TO AUTHORITARIAN FORM OF GOVERNMENT AND PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF JOINT PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER QUESTION OF  
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AMENDING CONSTITUTION. HE CRITICIZED BARROW FOR HIS ATTACKS ON

GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS OPPOSING BILL AND ACCUSED HIM OF INTOLERANCE IN IDENTIFYING REALIZATION OF HIS OWN VIEWS WITH PROGRESS. ADAMS ALSO DEALT AT SOME LENGTH WITH PROPOSAL TO AMEND PRESENT METHOD OF APPOINTING JUDGES, SUGGESTING THAT PROPOSED CHANGE WOULD GIVE "WEAK MINDS AND TEMPESTUOUS SPIRITS" INCENTIVES TO SEEK POLITICAL FAVORS AND REJECTING BARROW'S CONTENTION THAT SECURITY OF TENURE WAS ADEQUATE GUARANTEE OF JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE.

3. HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SUSPENDED SHORTLY BEFORE 10:00 P.M. AFTER SESSION LASTING NEARLY 12 HOURS. DEBATE WILL RESUME AND PRESUMABLY BE CONCLUDED TODAY.

4. COMMENT: GOB OBVIOUSLY DETERMINED THAT BILL WILL BE ADOPTED, AND PREPONDERANCE AND DISCIPLINE OF RULING DEMOCRATIC LABOR PARTY WILL ENSURE PASSAGE.

5. I WAS PRESENT FOR PART OF DEBATE, INCLUDING MOST OF PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH, AND SAW LITTLE EVIDENCE OF THE POLITICAL AND ORATORICAL SKILLS FOR WHICH HE IS KNOWN. HE HAD OBVIOUSLY TAKEN NO PAINS TO ORGANIZE HIS MATERIAL SO AS TO MAKE AN EFFECTIVE CASE FOR THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS AND SEEMED TO BE BORED WITH THE WHOLE AFFAIR. BUT FOR OCCASIONAL FLASHES OF WIT (MOSTLY BARBED REFERENCE TO ADAMS AND OTHER OPPONENTS OF THE BILL, ESPECIALLY ANGLICAN BISHOP DREXEL GOMEZ), HIS SPEECH WOULD SCARCELY HAVE BEEN WORTHY OF AN INEXPERIENCED BACKBENCHER. SEEING HIM IN ACTION ON THIS OCCASION, I FOUND SOME VINDICATION OF THE HYPOTHESIS, HEARD LATELY WITH INCREASING FREQUENCY, THAT HE IS TIRED AND FED UP WITH POLITICS AND WILL STEP DOWN BEFORE THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTIONS. END COMMENT.  
SIMMS

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## Message Attributes

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